

*Commissioner of Agriculture  
and Food  
Leonard M. Blackham*



Greetings.

Agriculture in Utah enjoyed a generally positive year in 2011 as prices paid to cattle and sheep ranchers reached all-time highs. The same was true for our crop farmers and hay producers. Finally, a year that reversed the recent trend of low farm prices that threatened the stability of our family-owned farms. The poultry, dairy and hog industries saw prices that at least helped them remain in business.

While we were blessed with an abundance of snow and rain this past winter, some of our producers suffered from flooding as the warming spring temperatures sent our rivers and creeks over their banks.

Personally, I enjoyed my time as president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) as our organization regularly met to find solutions to a myriad of challenges that face agriculture on a national level. One important issue that we addressed was the need for a fair, legal and sensible system that addresses the labor needs on the farm. In September, the NASDA body met in Salt Lake City to unanimously adopt the Utah Compact as a foundation for a national guest worker program for agriculture. Our future food security needs are too important for agriculture to not lead the way in finding a solution to this very difficult issue.

I thank you for your interest in Utah agriculture, and invite you to review our annual report to learn more about these and other important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonard M. Blackham".

Leonard M. Blackham  
Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food



# Commissioner's Office

The Department continues to prioritize its programs based on the changing needs of its customers. The pesticide safety program, for example, rewrote the Pesticide Rule in response to increased infractions discovered following the investigation of the deaths of two Layton children in 2010.

In the area of farmland protection, the Department is a major participant in the Agriculture Sustainability Task Force which is looking for ways to protect Utah farm and ranchland. An August 2011 survey of Wasatch Front residents confirmed the public's support for protecting farmland. Results of that survey show:

- 97% of respondents view farming and ranching as important to the future of the State of Utah.
- 80% believe converting farmland into subdivisions will eventually lead to greater dependence on foreign food.
- 77% feel livestock grazing on public land is acceptable.
- 76% of respondents support using a small portion of the existing tax on food to protect Utah farmland.
- 52% believe the Utah Legislature should divert taxpayer dollars into the LeRay McAllister fund to protect local farmland.

The Department's AgriAdvocates campaign is another program designed to educate Utah consumers about the value of Utah farms and ranches. The second annual "Farming at the Market" event was held at the downtown farmers market in Salt Lake City in August to promote more public awareness of Utah agriculture. Visit: [www.agriadvocates.org](http://www.agriadvocates.org).

The Utah's Own program has long understood and promoted the importance of locally grown foods. Utah's Own is working with the growing number of urban farmers as a means to educate the larger Wasatch Front population about the connection between their food and the farm.



A major event this year was Commissioner Blackham's leadership of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). Its annual meeting was held in Utah Sept. 14 - 19. As president of NASDA, the Commissioner worked to reduce the unnecessary regulatory impediments that threaten farmers and ranchers ability to remain in business. In Salt Lake City, the NASDA board unanimously adopted the Utah Compact, which is a foundation of principles that address immigration and farm labor issues.

The Utah Grazing Improvement Program (UGIP) is focused on improving grazing management by increasing water availability and building fences to enhance control of livestock. By summer 2012, we estimate that the program will have benefited 2.1 million acres. UGIP participated in the rehabilitation of rangeland devastated by the 2007 Milford Flat fire. Today the range grasses are less fire prone and resistant to large dust storms that contribute to Wasatch Front pollution. UDAF/UGIP is currently working with partners in three large-scale projects in Rich, Carbon, and Box Elder Counties that total over 1.5 million acres. We believe that investing human and financial resources to create financial, social, and ecological wealth from the public and private rangelands of Utah will elevate the lives of every Utahn.

Information about these and other programs is available at: [www.ag.utah.gov/](http://www.ag.utah.gov/)